

GRETCHEN HEALY

700 West 39th Street, Apartment A
South Sioux City, Nebraska 68776
September 10, 2001

Lake H. Barrett, Acting Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
Department of Energy
Washington, District of Columbia 20585

SEP 26 2001

Dear Mr. Barrett:

I am writing at your invitation to comment on the selection of Yucca Mountain as a repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. As a citizen I am deeply concerned about this issue. Thank you for your invitation to comment. I offer what I hope is an informed opinion.

I am unalterably opposed to the development of Yucca Mountain as a repository for spent nuclear fuel, for the following reasons, most of which you are already aware:

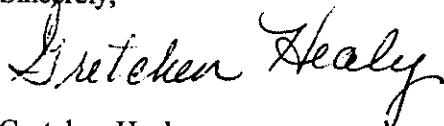
- The site is crisscrossed with earthquake faults;
- There are dormant volcanoes nearby;
- The volcanic rock is riddled with fractures;
- Water moves through these fractures;
- Rainwater can percolate down to the waste-storage area in just 50 years;
- In another 50 years, water could reach the aquifer 1,000 feet below the storage area;
- Plutonium from underground bomb tests clinging to specks of clay moved nearly a mile in 30 years—much faster than anyone suspected;
- The nickel-based alloy material proposed as storage canisters have only been tested for 3 years. It is unknown at present whether they will remain free of corrosion for 10,000 years;
- If the area goes through a climate change and becomes much wetter, or goes through another ice age, there is no way to predict what the action of a glacier or long-term flooding would do to the mountain or to the repository;
- The half-life of the most potent elements in the fuel, such as plutonium, is probably much longer than 10,000 years;
- "Absolutely" is not something that can be said about a computer model based on probabilities;
- The future gets murkier the farther it is projected with current knowledge;

- The ordinary activities of animals, insects, and plants--digging, burrowing, and rooting--over time, are uncontrollable, and unpredictable;
- Computer models were unable to accurately predict which presidential candidate would get the majority of votes in Florida in 2000; why should we rely on them for predicting the probability of radiation leakage from this storage facility?
- It is still unknown what might happen to the site in 10,000 years as a result of the activities of people. In 10,000 years, languages changes dramatically. Will they be able to read posted signs? Will they be able to read at all?
- It is unknown what the future actions of governments will be. The site will be vulnerable to eco-terrorists; wars may be fought in the area; and people who do not have the best interests of a healthy biosphere at heart may exploit the repository for its potential lethality;
- I have little faith that the President of this country or the Congress has the will to protect its citizens now, much less 10,000 years in the future. They seem much more interested in protecting the rights of corporations than people, and even less interest for ecosystems;
- It is my feeling that Congress is more interested in finding a quick solution to the nuclear waste problem that is affordable, (and I use that word loosely) both financially and politically, than in finding a permanent site that will truly protect the citizens of this land and the ecosystems. Expedience rules;
- To date, more of our own citizens have been killed or sickened by the development of nuclear weapons than have ever, or are ever likely to be, killed, maimed or sickened by their use in a war. This is true also of the waste generated by this mad arms race;
- The maximum dose, 15 millirems, allowed by the EPA is too high. In fact, there is no safe dose of radiation. It is all dangerous to life and health, including the so-called "background radiation".

To summarize, it is my opinion that the use of Yucca Mountain as a repository for spent nuclear fuel is ill-conceived and dangerous. It is my hope that the Department of Energy will reconsider this plan soon and stop wasting money on the development of this site.

Thank you for your invitation to comment. I appreciate this opportunity; as a citizen of this country, it is my job to let you know how I feel.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Healy